

March 8, 2007

BISHOP SPEAKS OUT ON THE CRISIS OF CARE FOR VETERANS AT WALTER REED AND OTHER FACILITIES

Congressman Tim Bishop issued the following statement on the need for decisive action to bring better care to veterans at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other VA and military medical facilities around the country:

There are over one million veterans in the state of New York, many living in the First District on Long Island. Nearly 10,000 brave New Yorkers currently deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan will soon be returning veterans.

It is one of my greatest honors to cut through the red tape and present overdue medals to veterans in my district. But I want to be able to secure more than just medals for these brave men and women. I want to be able to look them in the eye and tell them that their government honors them with the best medical care available.

After the revelations about building 18 at Walter Reed, I struggle to say that today.

But this crisis of care extends beyond one medical facility. We're learning of similar problems at other VA facilities around the country. This crisis follows a pattern of this Administration. Its rhetoric about supporting our troops does match the reality of its actions. Sending our troops to Iraq without proper equipment and training, placing them in a no-win situation, and allowing the appalling conditions at Walter Reed, all highlight how it has failed our troops. Like its woefully inadequate response to the Gulf Coast disaster, the Administration's care of our veterans lacks humanity and compassion.

In addition, the President's budget short-changes veterans' health care, cutting funds in FY 2009 and 2010 and freezing funds thereafter. This, at a time when recently wounded troops could overwhelm the VA health care system. The President's budget also imposes new health care fees on 1.3 million veterans.

We can do better. Our first priority must continue to be protecting and providing for the brave men and women in uniform who serve this nation.